BACKGROUNDER 1-0502 APRIL 5, 1976
LARRY FREUND/BELGRADE

ROMANIAN NATIONALISM RESURGENT

ANNCR:

THE ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO ACCENT THE COUNTRY'S HISTORICAL ROOTS, A POLICY EVIDENT IN THE ARTS, AS WELL AS IN POLITICS. VO-A CORRESPONDENT LARRY FREUND, A RECENT VISITOR IN ROMANIA, SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

ROMANIAN NEWSPAPERS BEGAN THE YEAR BY PUBLISHING NEW WORDS FOR AN OLD SONG. THE MUSIC WAS COMPOSED IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY BY CIPRIAN PORENBESCU, AND THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF IN BUCHAREST -- UNCONFIRMED SO FAR -- THAT SOONER OR LATER THE MUSIC WILL BE JOINED WITH THE LYRICS TO BECOME THE COUNTRY'S NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM.

WHILE THE MUSIC IS NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD, IT IS SO WELL KNOWN, ACCORDING TO ROMANIANS, THAT IT CANNOT HELP BUT EVOKE NATIONALISTIC FEELINGS AMONG THE PEOPLE THE NEW WORDS COMBINE SENTIMENTS OF DEFENDING THE ROMANIAN LAND AGAINST ITS ENEMIES WITH A CALL FOR AN ASCENDANCE TOWARDS COMMUNISM.

THE SAME EMPHASIS ON HISTORICAL ROOTS, COMBINED WITH THE IDEOLOGICAL TONES OF PRESENT DAY ROMANIA, IS REFLECTED IN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE WHICH EXERCISES A STRONG INFLUENCE ON ART TRENDS IN ROMANIA. AN OFFICAL THERE SAYS THAT IT IS A PREOCCUPATION OF THE COUNCIL TO PRESERVE WHAT HE CALLS THE TREASURE OF FOLKLORE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE COUNCIL PROMOTES THE REALISTIC ART STYLES OFFICIALLY IN FAVOR. THAT COINCIDES WITH PRESS ATTACKS ON ABSTRACT ART AND THE DISMISSAL OF THE EDITOR OF A ROMANIAN ARTS

REVIEW REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL TRENDS.

ROMANIA'S SENSE OF ITS OWN HERITAGE, AS SEEN BY THE GOVERNMENT, HAS ALSO LED IT TO EXCHANGES WITH SOVIET COMMENTATORS OVER THE SENSTIVE MOLDAVIAN AREA, ALSO KNOWN AS BESSARABIA, WHICH BECAME PART OF THE SOVIET UNION THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO. THERE HAS BEEN A RECENT FLURRY OF DEBATES BETWEEN SOVIET AND ROMANIAN WRITERS ON THE HISTORY OF THE REGION. WESTERN OBSERVERS EXPECT THE DEBATES TO CONTINUE, WITH PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU CONTINUING TO ESTABLISH HIS NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS AMONG ROMANIANS.

AT THE SAME TIME, PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU HAS ISSUED A STRONG WARNING AGAINST MINORITY GROUPS IN ROMANIAN, WHO, AS HE PUT IT IN A SPEECH LATE LAST YEAR, WANT TO RUN AWAY. ADDRESSING A MEETING OF HUNGARIAN AND GERMAN ETHNIC MINORITIES, PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU DECLARED THEN THAT THE PLACE OF EVERY CITIZEN OF ROMANIA, WHETHER ROMANIAN, MAGYAR, GERMAN, SERIAN OR JEW, IS IN ROMANIA. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS FOLLOWED BY A PRESS CAMPAIGN FOCUSING ON ROMANIANS WHO WERE SAID TO HAVE REGRETTED THEIR DECISIONS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. ROMANIAN NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF CASE STUDIES OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO WERE DESCRIBED AS UNHAPPY AFTER MOVING TO WESTERN EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND ISRAEL. THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH HAS NOW STOPPED, IS SEEN BY OBSERVERS AS A WARNING TO ROMANIANS WHO MIGHT WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, AND AS BEING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENERAL TIGHTENING-UP THAT THE COUNTRY HAS SEEN DURING THE PAST YEAR.

GH/CAK